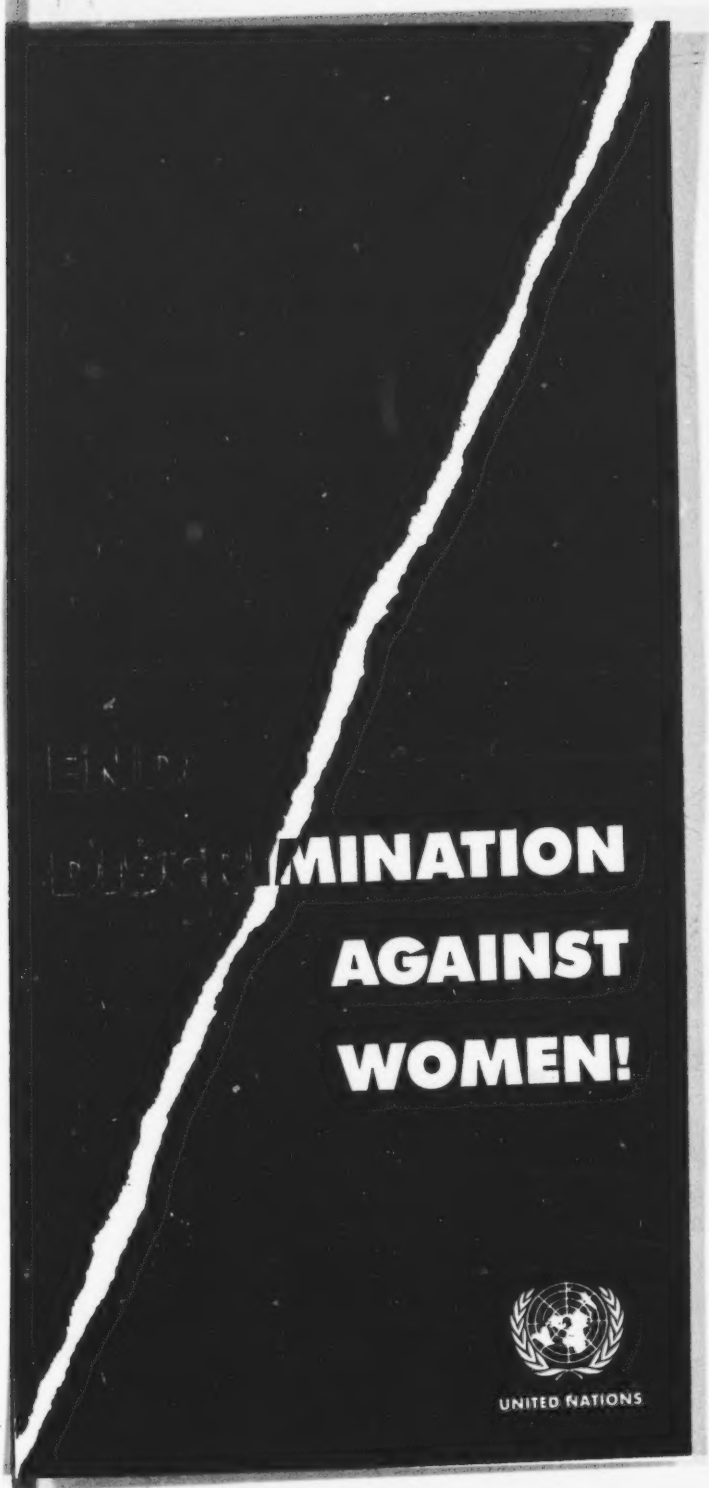
MINATION
AGAINST
WOMEN!
UNITED NATIONS

''Discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity.''

—Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Women have rights. And their rights include an end to all forms of discrimination—be it in the family or in society, before the law or in their everyday lives—until women are accepted as the full equals of men.

The United Nations has promoted gender equality since its inception, when in 1946 it established the Commission on the Status of Women. Over the years, the world Organization has continuously expanded its work for women to cover all areas where women suffer discrimination. Today, there are five distinct bodies in the United Nations system dealing with women's issues: the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which are intergovernmental bodies; the Division for the Advancement of Women; the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). The first two fulfil monitoring and advisory functions for the United Nations General Assembly, while the others are responsible for programme implementation. Moreover, every United Nations agency maintains a focal point on women to ensure that women's concerns are integrated into its specific mandate.

Most important of all, the United Nations has adopted several declarations and conventions which set the standards for all countries for achieving equality between men and women. The most comprehensive, legally binding document on women's rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 as the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.** This treaty, in fact, constitutes an international bill of rights for women. And it also sets up an agenda for national action to end discrimination.

At its core, as all human rights treaties do, the Convention provides for women's civil rights and their legal equality in all fields. Above and beyond that, the Convention is the only human rights treaty to affirm the reproductive rights of women and to target culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations. This multi-dimensional approach makes the Convention a landmark treaty in the struggle to end discrimination based on sex and to guarantee women the enjoyment of all their fundamental rights.

The articles of the Convention are described in this pamphlet.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women consists of a preamble and 30 articles. Articles 1 to 16 deal with specific actions to be taken by countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention, called States parties. Articles 17 to 30 describe the procedure for the implementation of the Convention.

Discrimination (Article 1)

Discrimination against women is defined as any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

Policy measures (Article 2)

Discrimination against women in all its forms is condemned and the States parties agree to undertake:

- To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions, civil codes or other laws and to ensure the realization of this principle;
- To adopt appropriate laws prohibiting all discrimination against women;
- To establish tribunals and other public institutions for the effective protection of women against discrimination;
- To ensure that public authorities and institutions shall refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women;
- To ensure that all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises are eliminated;

- To abolish all existing laws, regulations, customs and practices that discriminate against women;
- To repeal all penal provisions that discriminate against women.

Guarantee of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms (Article 3)

States parties agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, in all fields in order to guarantee women their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms on the same basis as men.

Special measures (Article 4)

Temporary special measures to accelerate women's equity and all measures taken for maternity protection are not to be considered discriminatory.

Sex roles (Article 5)

All States parties to the Convention agree to take measures:

- To achieve the elimination of prejudices and all practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either sex or on stereotyped roles for men and women;
- To ensure that family education teaches a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and that men and women share a common responsibility in the upbringing of their children.

Prostitution (Article 6)

All appropriate measures, including legislation, should be taken to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of women.

Political and public life (Article 7)

Women shall, on equal terms with men, share in the political and public life of the country, and shall have the right:

- To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;
- To participate in the formulation of government policy and to hold office at all levels of government;
- To participate in non-governmental organizations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

Representation (Article 8)

Women shall be given the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level, and to participate in the work of international organizations.

Nationality (Article 9)

Women shall have equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality and the nationality of their children. In particular, marriage to a national of another country shall not automatically affect the nationality of the wife.

Education (Article 10)

Women shall be granted equal rights with m in the field of education, particularly in:

- Career and vocational guidance;
- Curricula, examinations, qualified teach staff, and the standard of school premises c equipment;
- Coeducation and the revision of textbook eliminate stereotyped concepts;
- Scholarships and study grants;
- Continuing education, including literacy p grammes;
- Reduction of female student drop-out rat
- Equal opportunities to participate actively sports and physical education;
- Access to information to ensure the health c well-being of families, including advice on f ily planning.

Employment (Article 11)

Measures shall be taken to eliminate discrimi tion against women in the field of employme and to ensure the following rights:

- To work;
- To the same employment opportunities men;
- To the free choice of profession and empl ment, to promotion, to job security, to benefits and conditions of service and to ceive vocational training and retraining cluding apprenticeships, advanced vocatio training and recurrent training;
- To equal remuneration, including benefits, c to equal treatment in respect of work of eq value, as well as equality of treatment in evaluation of the quality of work;
- To social security;
- To health protection and safety in working c ditions.

In order to prevent discrimination against women on the ground of marriage or maternity, States parties shall take appropriate measures:

- To prohibit dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy, maternity leave or marital status;
- To introduce maternity leave with pay or comparable social benefits without loss of employment, seniority or social allowances;
- To encourage the provision of social services, particularly a network of child-care facilities, to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities;
- To provide special protection to women during pregnancy in types of work proved to be harmful to them.

The protective legislation mentioned above is to be reviewed periodically and revised in the light of new scientific and technological knowledge.

Health (Article 12)

Measures are to be taken to eliminate discrimination in the field of health care to ensure that women have equal access to health care services, including those related to family planning.

Appropriate services shall be provided to women in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.

Economic and social benefits (Article 13)

Women shall have, on an equal basis with men, the following rights:

- To family benefits;
- To bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;
- To participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.

Rural women (Article 14)

Account shall be taken of the particular problems of women in rural areas and of the special roles they play in the economic survival of the family, including unpaid work. Therefore, the following rights are called for:

- To participate in elaborating and implementing development planning at all levels;
- To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;
- To benefit directly from social security programmes;
- To obtain all types of training and education, including that aimed at increasing their technical proficiency;
- To organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities;
- To participate in all community activities;
- To have access to credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as land resettlement schemes;
- To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

Law (Article 15)

Women shall have equality with men before the law in the following areas:

- Identical legal capacity to that of men and the opportunities to exercise that capacity regarding contracts, administration of property, and court and tribunal procedures;
- All contracts and other legal private instruments that restrict the legal capacity of women shall be declared null and void;
- Women shall be able to move freely and be free to choose their residence and domicile.

Marriage and family (Article 16)

Women shall have equal rights and responsibilities with men in matters relating to marriage and family relations, in particular:

- To enter into marriage;
- To choose a spouse;
- During the marriage and its dissolution;
- As parents, irrespective of marital status;

- To choose freely the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights;
- With regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children;
- The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, profession and occupation;
- With regard to ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property.

A minimum age of marriage shall be specified and the registration of marriages in an official registry shall be made compulsory.

Implementation of the Convention (Articles 17-30)

The implementation of the Convention is monitored by the **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women** (CEDAW), established in 1982, the year after the Convention entered into force. The Committee is composed of 23 members, elected by the States parties under the criteria that they be experts "of high moral standing and competence in the field covered by the Convention". Although these experts are nominated by their Governments, they serve in their individual capacity. The Committee members are elected for a term of four years, and the officers for a term of two years.

The Committee convenes once a year, usually for a two-week period, to evaluate the progress made in the countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention. For that purpose, these countries compile national reports on the measures they have taken to comply with the treaty's obligations. Such reports should be submitted to the Committee by each country at least every four years. Their content is then discussed with government representatives at the annual session of the Committee. On the basis of these reports, the Committee members might suggest areas for further action by the specific country. The Committee's mandate also allows for making general recommendations to the States parties for eliminating discrimination against women.

The Convention concludes by giving details on the administration of the treaty.

To obtain the full text of the Convention or information about the Commission on the Status of Women or the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, please write to:

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